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The Right of Freedom

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5th of November, Minsk

WAGES!

«Wages!» – demanded Minsk workers at the Free Union's meeting on November 5.

The meeting in defence of the worker's social status and his «consumer basket», the place of staging which was Boulevard Tractarabudaunikou, got to become an attempt for direct contact with the government.

A definite mistrust could be read on faces of the workers, who made their way from the MTP (Minsk Tractor Plant) entrance check point to the crowd surrounding the speakers. The initiators and organisers of the meeting – Victar Ivashkevich, Maria Alieva and Irina Zhykhar, the leaders of the Free Union, - demanded immediate wages increase , giving them a status of first and foremost payment monthly allocation of broadcasting time on the state radio and TV.

There were a lot of speakers: Victar Valaied, a worker from Babruisk, Siargey Abadouski, a union official from Magilou, miners' representatives from Saligorsk. All the speakers had the similar opinion upon the following: we couldn't go on living like this, since people die because they cannot eat well and buy medicine. Ivan Pashkevich, the president's team representative, vividly showed his abilities to talk to people. He started to convince the workers that villains who worked for hundred-dollar notes, deliberately had gathered people there, as they had to work off the money. As a reply for that there was «Stop saying nonsense». The represents' proposal to take the meeting's resolution to the Presidential residence quickly changed the mood. At first many were sceptical towards the idea, but the majority of the participants of the meting followed the column with the Free Trade Union's flag. The militia was hardly prepared for the procession, that is why the whole way from the work to the presidential area it was only persuading the demonstration to break up intimidating it with the corresponding acts and decrees. Besides, Valery Shchukin, a reporter, in his speech, as one of the ways out of the economic crisis, suggested that the number of militia men should be decreased – 126.000 of militia man and 4.000 of the presidential personal guards. In Skaryna Avenue, the demonstration, which demanded «Wages!», was joined by those passers-by, who had not been able to buy anything in food stores except milk and bread. They nearly allowed to approach the residency. At this very moment a number of officers of special forces came out of the cars and cleared an area for the initiator of the meeting V.Ivashkevich, M.Alieva and reporter I.Zhykhar to go to the presidential residence to deliver a petition.

A lot of time went by and eventually they came back. They gave the petition to the woman on duty, she registered it and promised to «promote» it.

Within a month the leaders of the Free Trade Union will try to find possibility negotiate with the President and to perform their demands.

Minsk workers were joined by the working people from other towns: Saligorsk, Masty, Gomel who also protested against state instability.

A.M.

CHRONICLE

In the early morning on November 1, **the editorial office of the independent newspaper «Naviny» was robbed (earlier being banned by the authorities on November 24, 1997 it was named – the newspaper «Svaboda»). Somebody broke into the editorial office of the newspaper, which is on the ground floor of a dwelling house in Zmitrok Biadulya Street. They were professional burglars. All modern computers were dismantled in the bath-room. They had taken disks with memory and processor plates. They had destroyed a newspaper archives, data base, 2000 photos, which were in the computers. The data base had been collected for 8 years, it is practically impossible to restore it. They also stole a fax and a colour printer. The newspaper editor Pavel Zhuk is sure that this incident is – «a result of security organisation's activity on the eve of mass actions of protest.» Editor-in-chief of the newspaper «Naviny» Igar Giermyanchuk underline that the newspaper will come out in any way. The investigation is led by the Partyzansky Administration of Internal Affairs.**

On November 1, **in Minsk Belarusan opposition held a regular meeting and a march, dedicated to the Day of Commemorating of the ancestors – «Dzyady». In the column of people, which started from Yakub Kolas Square, there were 2.500 – 3.000 people. In Kurapaty, it is a place of mass shootings of victims during Stalin's regime, took place a commemorating meeting. It was opened by Vice Chairman of Belarusan Popular Front Yuras Belenky. Genadz Karpenka, Jury Zakharanka, Radzim Garetsky, Jury Khadyka and other famous people made their speeches.**

(to be continued on p.6)

Detentions and Trials

About 2.000 people took part in the action, organised by the Free Trade Union in Minsk on November 5.

Immediately after the demonstration procession 10 people were detained:

1. Ivashkevich Victar (initiator of the action); 2. Matskoits Siargey (a building worker); 3. Lazarchyck Alena (Matskoits's wife); 4. Ramanau Mikalai (a worker of the Minsk Automobile Plant); 5. Kanapatski Vadzim (an observer of the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96»); 6. Kastsyanevich Yuras (a minor); 7. Petrashkevich Pavel (a minor); 8. Scrabets Pavel (a driver of MAP); 9. Dranchuk Tsimaphei (a minor); 10. Scotchka Yaugen.

The initiator of the action M.Alieva, his daughter as well as reporter Zhykhar Irina were given subpoenas in their flats on November 6. The next day, on November 6, 1998 in Partyzansky Court they stood trial. Besides, in the court building one more reporter Valery Shchukin was detained. Three of the detained: Lazarchyck A., Zhykhar I. and Alieva M. were warned. The other will be on trial on November 12, 16 and 18, 1998.

On November 7, on Saturday, the Partyzansky Administration of Internal Affairs officer called on the leader of the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» Ales Bialatsky. They accused him of taking part in an unauthorised march of workers. He was subpoenaed. It said that he must come to trial on November 9 at 11 o'clock.

The Partyzansky Administration of Internal Affairs officers – Skurat Viktar Vatslavavich and Liavitsky Siargey Rygoravich were invited as witnesses at the trial. They gave testimony that A.Bialatsky was among the participants of the march and «was shouting something connected with wages». In reality, Ales Bialatsky had been present at the meeting as an observer.

Judge Trubnikau M.A. accused him of breaking the Article 167,1, part 2 of the Administrative Code. He was warned by the court. Although, in accordance with the Charter of the Human Rights Centre to study the position of public organisations and to observe human rights in Minsk is one of the purposes of this organisation. So, the presence of observers at the action is provided by the Charter. During the trade Union action on November 5, Vadzim Kanapatsky (detained after the march) and Ales Bialatsky did their duty – to observe the activities of militia officers and those in civil clothes as well as the participants of the march.

«Viasna-96» Information Department

50 Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Belarusan Popular Front «Adradzhennie»

Statement

On December 10, 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, which was aimed at achieving international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. BPF «Adradzhennie» claims that the current Lukashenka's regime 50 years after the adoption of the Declaration continues to breach most of its articles. It looks like a challenge to a civilised society, abusing the Belarusan population.

BPF «Adradzhennie» activities are aimed at preserving human rights in Belarus, at carrying out the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the social life of our country.

We call the Belarusan population to fight for their rights, not to be afraid of speaking against abuse and the current state policy in the field of human rights.

We demand freedom for political-prisoners – Ales Shydlousky, Uladzimir Pleshchanka, Uladzimir Kudzinau, Andrei Klimau, Rygor Kiiko, Uladzimir Lysko.

Long live free and democratic Belarus!



Igar Giermyanchuk has been an editor in chief of independent newspaper «Svaboda» since October, 1991. On November 24, 1997 «Svaboda» was officially banned by Belarusan authorities. From January 16, 1998 the newspaper comes out under the name «Naviny». Igar Giermyanchuk says: «President Lukashenka does not try to hide dissatisfaction with our newspaper, and once this dissatisfaction resulted in the fact that he banned our newspaper under the name «Svaboda».

In early morning on November 1, 1998, the editorial office of the newspaper «Naviny», which is on the ground floor of the dwelling house in Zmitrok Biadulya Street, was robbed. The investigation is conducted by the Partyzansky Administration of Internal Affairs.

— Mr. Giermyanchuk, will you tell us in details what happened in the early morning on November, 1.

— There was an incident resulted in paralysing the work of the editorial staff – the newspaper failed to come out.On Sunday, as usual, we came to work and saw our editorial office robbed. The burglars broke into the window. All the computers were dismantled, by the way they took only processors, and the monitors were left. They didn't take the whole processors, they took only their inside parts. They managed to take a fax as well. As a result, we couldn't manage to release the next issue of the newspaper. It goes without saying that we called the police at once. At the editorial office the militia officers started prosecution: they were looking for fingerprints and so on. They brought an action and the local militia department started investigation. Meanwhile we had to keep on publishing the newspaper. We could not fail to do it. One of the issues was failed, but the next day the newspaper came out. We borrowed two computers, it was not enough, but nevertheless it enabled us to renew the output of the newspaper. Nowadays we have a limited technical equipment, rented from our friends but we continue to publish the newspaper.

— What are your impressions of the incident?

— This burglary is rather suspicious, because there were other precious things at the editorial office apart of computers. There was a TVset, a safe, which the burglars could easily open, but nobody even tried to do it. They took only processors. That is why the possibility of getting their lands on our data base, on our data

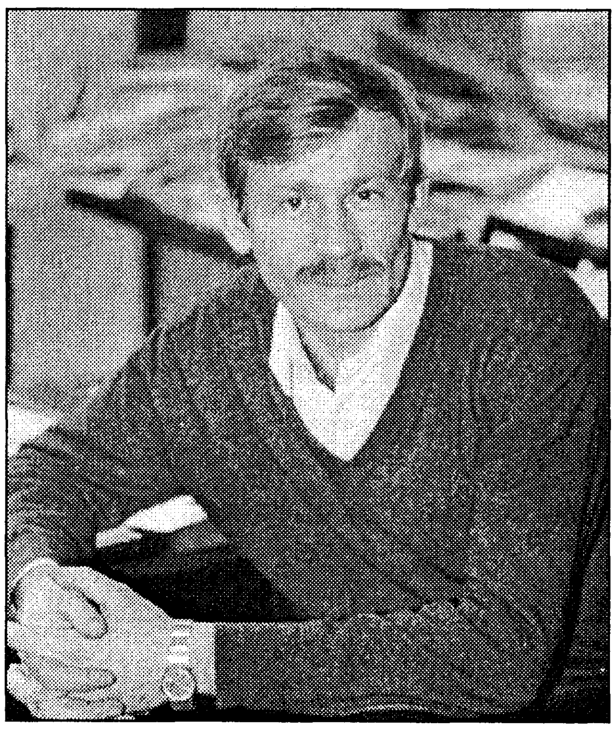
Igar Giermyanchuk: «We Have Always Been On Hard Terms With The Authorities»

resources but not of stealing our material values cannot be ruled out. This is one of the reasons, the other is to dispossess of the resources, to block up our activity.

So our losses are estimated at 3.000 US-dollars, but the most precious are not the materialistic resources we have lost. In particular, we had a considerable data base: various archives materials, more than 2 thousands of photos, which we had only in electronic version. When we are deprived of all these things, undoubtedly, it is more difficult to publish the newspaper. We told the prosecution, that it is possible, that one of the security organisations was involved in it. We insisted on our idea being reflected in the record of prosecution. The prosecution officers agreed to enter this version, but they said: «Do you understand that we are not empowered to examine this version». That is why we insisted on one more our version being entered in the record: «We hold the view that the General Prosecution office must carry on a lawsuit on this case». Because in practice, all the wrong-doings committed against the editorial staff of our newspaper or against me personally as an editor in chief for some reason or other were investigated by lower authorities and we can only guess why all of them were not disclosed. The situation in the country is the following: 90 – 80 percent of all crimes are come out, but the offences to our newspaper are included into those 10 – 20 percent which are not disclosed

— Were there many offences to your newspaper?

— Two years ago from my private house somebody stole a computer, by the way only a processor. To my mind it's similar to that one. There were also quite precious things in my house but nobody knows why they stole only a processor. Besides, there was one more unpleasant incident for my family and me in February, 1997. Somebody had fired a precision shot in the window of my study. We came home late at night and saw the window pierced by the bullet. The most unpleasant thing is



that the bullet had passed exactly through the place where I am used to sit at the table working late in the evening or at night. At that time one can see a light in the window and a man silhouette. So I realise that this shot was like a warning. It aimed at threatening, having effect on me as an editor in chief to make the newspaper tolerant to the President and his policy. I called the militia. They came, examined everything, found the bullet and wondered who tried to threaten me in such a way. I answered: «I have no enemies except for President Lukashenka and his people!» These are two significant examples when the offences were not disclosed. That is why I fear lest this editorial office robbery should be disclosed.

— Any oppressions from the authorities to your newspaper?

— We have always been on hard terms with our authorities. Under the Communist regime it was an underground issue. Shortly after Lukashenka came to power, it became more difficult to publish the newspaper than it used to be earlier. Lukashenka firstly wanted to suppress us economically. There were formed special teams of tax-inspectors who called on the editorial offices of independent newspapers, as well as on ours to elicit the facts of tax infringement. They failed to find any tax infringements. We used to distribute a certain quantity of newspapers as a part of advertising campaign. To their mind it was a violation of law. They convicted us of having sold these newspapers and having appropriated the income. We were considerably fined. But the tax inspectors could not make stop publishing our newspaper. Then the authorities acted more toughly. In 1997 they started arresting reporters while the featuring the demonstrations of the opposition. I remember one action, taking place in March, 1997 – it was a youth demonstration, prohibited by the authorities. Naturally, the youth went on a strike. Naturally I sent one of my reporters to that action. Then I got to know of my cellular phone that he had been arrested by the militia. I sent two more reporters to the scene of actions, they were arrested when they were approaching it. This evening three of our reporters were seized. All in all this evening 20 journalists were arrested. Undoubtedly they were released 4-5 hours later but without any explanations. I asked the prosecutor's office to investigate the case, but my persistent demands were ignored. So, the year 1997 was marked as the year of journalists abuse.

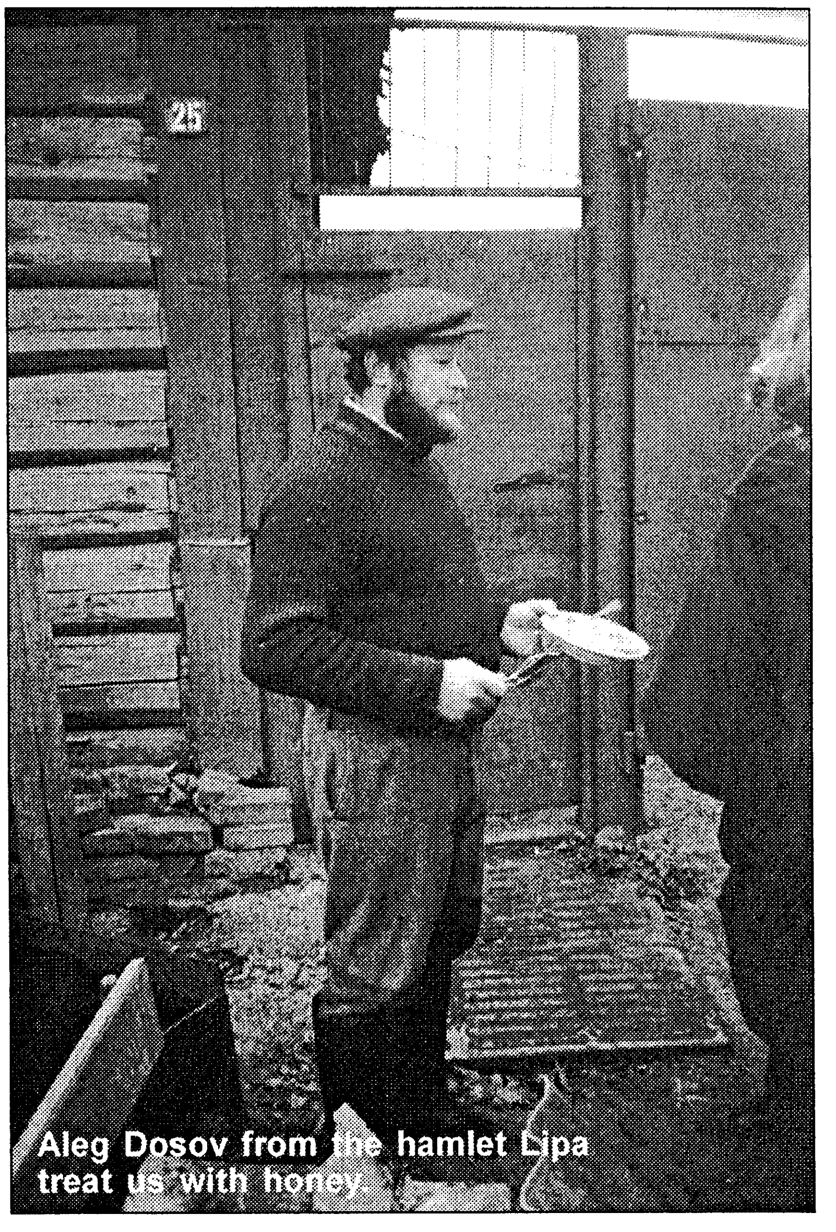
Later on they attempted to evict our newspaper from the building we rented from a state organisation. Eventually President Lukashenka decided to ban the newspaper. As a result of a 15-minute court examination, which looked quite formal, the court banned the newspaper. The court carried it out but it was known that Lukashenka had ordered to do it. On November 24, 1997 the newspaper «Svaboda» was banned. It had been coming out for 8 years and it had been banned for 15 minutes. We had to start from the very beginning: from a new title from a new audience. «Svaboda» had a circulation of 50.000 issues, nowadays.

«Naviny» comes out 3 times a week, but it hasn't yet reached «Svaboda» level – it has a circulation of 22.000 issues. The fact that one day the newspaper «Naviny» would be banned is not ruled out. As long as we have a legal possibility to issue the newspaper we will keep on doing it legally. If not – we will do it illegally.

Palina STSEPANENKA

At the end of October, 1998 by invitation of the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» Minsk was visited by the delegation, which represented a Swedish organisation «For peace and arbitration and the newspaper «Parks» («Peace»).
It was the first visit of Swedish pacifists in Belarus and no wonder they wanted to get acquainted with different aspects of our country.

Dangerous Area


Aleg Dosov from the hamlet Lipa treat us with honey.

Svetlagorsk

At the present moment the Belarusan public is deeply concerned about this town as there the problem of spreading drugs and HIV among the youth arises. What is the reason? Svetlagorsk – is so called «a young town», it was built in 1961 on the site of the village Shatsilki. The town is small, compact, everybody knows each other. In case there is a new passion in one of the yards, it spreads very quickly in others. Addiction to drugs came to Svetlagorsk from Russia – from Moscow and Leningrad, where the youth used to go to study. They studied there, and got to know another «profession»: how to take and how to make drugs.

In the public centre «Parents for future of children» we were told that in the town and its districts (population of it is about 100.000) 1.300 HIV-infected are officially registered. But it is only official statistics – in reality there are by far more. The official of the rehabilitation centre Uladzimir Ramantsau said: «Svetlagorsk is ranked sixth in Europe, taking into consideration the number of a HIV-infected.

Uladzimir Ramantsau told us about the state of things: «In June, 1996 three cases of HIV-infection among drug-addicts were made known. Before that 186 cases of HIV-infection were registered in Belarus, but beginning from 1996 the number of HIV-infected started to grow increasingly. Mainly, they are drug-addicts, but there are about 100 cases of infection by sexual contact. 26 children were born by HIV-infected women».

In the centre «Parents for future of children» we were told, that the new Svetlagorsk youth is less obsessed with drugs – teenagers are afraid of infection. Recently two anonymous trust centres have been opened for drug-addicts, where they can exchange syringes, take condoms, as well as a piece of advice and help. Besides, there is a public education campaign among the population. But the citizens of the town are not unanimous in their opinions. Many of them are indignant about the fact that drug-addicts are given syringes free of charge while there is lack of them in hospitals and policlinics.

The Administration of Internal Affairs intends to struggle against drugs spreading, but it is far more easier for militiamen to catch up a drug-addict rather than spot on the man who supplies it. The officers of the centre over-persuade the militiamen not to beat drug-addicts, explaining that they risk to catch AIDS.

Gomel

In the centre of region our group faced with unjustified troubles. At 8 o'clock we got to the hotel «Gomel» but the reception refused to check in a Swedish delegation, referring to the absence of passports together with visas, left in Minsk. The Swedish could not get it. They had identity cards and driving licenses with them. It is sufficient to check in any hotel in their country. We had to go to another hotel and explain the situation in which our guests found themselves. The receptionists hesitated and asked us to wait until they phoned the district KGB. They answered: «Check in!» We were friendly shown to our rooms. Having had supper in a local restaurant, everybody went to have a rest in order to continue the trip in the morning. But we did not manage to go to sleep quietly – the militia came to the hotel and threatening to take worried Swedes in custody finally confiscated Belarusan passports from the members of the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» this very evening the documents were passed to the Administration of Internal Affairs of Central district in Gomel. In the morning we had to go to get them. There we were expected by the representatives of Gomel KGB. It turned out, that was them who had sent the police to detain «spies». Apart of the officer of the organisation «For

peace and arbitration» Linda Isaksan no one among the Swedes spoke Russian, but the abbreviation KGB everybody got used to hear.

The representatives of KGB were more interested in the aim of the arrival of citizens of Sweden to Gomel district and in the main activity of their organisation. When the officer of KGB asked what their organization is engaged in, our leader answered: «Guns!» This answer set a trap for the Gomel security officers, they nearly rushed to search cars where was nothing except for presents for the people, who suffered from Chernobyl catastrophe and for their personal belongings. Mr. Bialatsky had to interfere in the talk and explained that the Swedes are pacifists and are struggling against spreading of arms, in particular against anti-infantry mines. The district security officers and the Central Administration of Internal Affairs did not manage to find any compromise, but they decided to increase the city budget at the expense of non-having passports Swedes – they were convicted of breaking the passport regime and were fined 4 mln Belarusan roubles.

Radio-active villages

Having prepared dosimeters, we made for Buda-Kashaliova district to have a look at the areas, which suffered after the Chernobyl catastrophe.

Our first stop was the former village Lipa. In the early 80s it used to be a large village. When they built a new school, the youth started to move there from the nearest areas.


School in Lipa.

In 1991 – 1992 the village Lipa was buried. Now from 300 country estates, we can see only abandoned gardens, a robbed school, half-destroyed shop and a lonely dwelling house, near which we met its owner – Aleg Dosau. Aleg was glad to see unexpected guests and talked to us with pleasure. He paid no attention to the figures on our dosimeters. Aleg Dosau, who was 33 when they buried Lipa, categorically refused leave his native place. He lives with his mother and wife. His children come on holidays – they live in Gomel, where they go to school. One asked Dosau: «Do not you feel sad without neighbours?» He answered: «My only dream is that one day I wake up and everything is as it used to be: the village is alive, all neighbours have come back. But it is impossible... The neighbours come here from the places, where they were moved. They kiss the trees, they planted. There are gardens, they were not buried». A hospitable owner had us to honey, which the Swedes who are accustomed to eat ecologically healthy products, refused to eat. Having covered some distance, we saw the mounts of buried villages Zakreuje, Barki, Kurgan, Kharoshauka. Only the local citizens can prove that not long ago people used to live there.

The village Khalotcha in Chachersk district was evacuated, but not buried. Only 8 country estates out of 250 are left. Local citizens call their small villages. Two times a week an auto-shop comes there, with canned meat, vodka and bread. One of the owners told us that there come criminals who are engaged in looting. Last week somebody stole 16 hens. My heart ached to see sad faces of the citizens of those abandoned villages.

The Swedish guests were leaving Belarus. At parting Olsa Karlsman said: «Everything we saw there looked like a film in which we starred, in which one can laugh and cry and we saw that in your country people more often laugh at those things at which one wants to cry over.»

Mikola STSEPANENKA


The hamlet Kholochye.

Events, Facts, Comments

(continuation from p.1)

On November 1, in Navapolatsk an initiative group of the local BPF «Adradzhennie» Council members held a piquet against rapidly deteriorating living standards of the population. The authorities had not allowed to hold a piquet in the centre of the town, that is why it took place in the cultural and amusement park of Navapolatsk.

On November 2, Magilou entrepreneurs organised a one-day strike of protest against the policy of oppression, conducted by local authorities towards those people who sell at the market. There were slogans: «Sorry, we are on a strike» hanging over the empty shelves of Magilou markets. The militia officers demanded to take down the slogans, threatening with fines for «conducting a non-authorised piquet». At the open meetings of the Free Trade Union of private entrepreneurs, which took place on this very day at Prydniaprousky and Pryvakzalny markets, entrepreneurs decided to fight for their rights. After the meeting at Pryvakzalny market they attempted to detain the representative of Magilou district organisation of the Free Trade Union Siargey Abadousky, but seeing the indignation of people, the militia officers let him go.

On November 2, under the initiative of the independent newspaper «Nasha Niva» was conducted an action «Language Day». It aimed at enlarging the spheres of usage of the native language and eliminating restrictions of the rights of Belarusan-speaking citizens. At that day, all those who are concerned about the Belarusan language, were proposed to speak it not only at home but also in public places.

On November 3, in Saligorsk the official Trade Union of «Belaruskaliy» led out 6 thousands of miners in the streets of the town. In the town stadium a meeting took place, where the workers demanded to bring wages and pensions into accord with the current prices

On November 4, in Saligorsk took place a meeting of miners, organised by Independent Trade Union, devoted to the Rights of Workers. More than 3 thousands people took part in it. Miners trade Union expects the government to solve their problems before December 1. Otherwise, the Independent Trade Union is going to announce a pre-strike situation.

On November 4-5, in Grodna they stopped selling at the both clothing markets – «Central» and «Southern» ones. As the leader of entrepreneur trade Union U. Levaneusky pointed, the traders had incurred losses on purpose «approximately 3-4 mln Belarusan roubles each). The action of protest was organised as a sympathetic one with the working movement.

On November 4-5, in Slonim the market is on strike.

On November 5, in Masty an authorised meeting for the workers' rights took place.

On November 5, the Magilou City Executive Committee again prohibited the Free Trade Union to organise a demonstration under economic demands from Savetskaya Square to Lenin Square. They allowed to conduct it in an uninhabited part of the town.

At the beginning of November the Brest City Executive Committee made a resolution to organise any mass meetings only at one place – at the stadium «Budaunik» which is located in the outskirts of the town.

On November 5 most of traders who sell in a Minsk stadium «Dinamo» did not come to work. It was initiated by the Republic Trade Union of members of co-operative societies small business and other kinds of free enterprise «Sadruzhnasts». Trade Union called up to support a march and rally on November 5. Entrepreneurs of other city markets «Cherviensky» and «Zdanovichy» responded to Trade Union's appeal.

On November 5, 1998 near metro station «Traktarny plant» a sanctioned meeting took place. It was organised by the Free Trade Union (FTU). The meeting was against poverty and rapidly deteriorating living standards of Belarusan population, and also they demanded to rise wages of working people. About 2.000 people took part in it. The participants made a resolution. After the meeting about 500 people made their way to the presidential residence to take over the meeting resolution. The participants were carrying a white-red-white flags, the flag of the Free Trade Union and slogans «Wages!» «We can't stand it any more!» After the march 10 people were detained.

On November 5, after the march an observer of Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» Vadzim Kanapatsky was detained. The trial was put off on the 17 of November.

On November 6, the declarants of the Free Trade Union meeting M.Alieva and his daughter together with a journalist I.Zhykhar were given subpoenas by militia officer in their flats.

On November 6, 1998. There were trials over the detained on the 5 of November at Partyzansky Court in Minsk. Besides, in the court building a journalist Valery Shchukin was detained. Three of the detained: A.Lazarchyk, I.Zhykhar, M.Alieva were warned. The other lawsuits are put off on the 12, 16 and 18 of November, 1998.

On November 7, the «Young Front» marked the anniversary of Bolshevic October coup d'йtat by organizing a run along Minsk circular motorway.

At night of November 7, in Zhodzina a monument to Lenin was exploded. The head of the monument was cut off as a result of the explosion.

On November 7, in Brest, during the Communist meeting in square near the monument to Lenin there appeared the friends of Bierastsieyskaya branch of the «Young Front» (5 persons). They unrolled the slogans: «Congratulations on the holiday of victims and torturers». Besides, the representatives of the Young Front brought a sack of sugar to the foot of the monument and pinned a slogan on it: «Sugar is free of charge!» They offered sugar to pensioners free of charge. But nobody managed to take it, as the militia got interested in them and demanded the participants to show their passports. «You are breaking the order!» – announced one of the militia officers. «We only intended to help the old» – answered one of the participants of the action, a worker Siargey Gryn.



On November 9, at 11 o'clock in the morning in Partyzansky court leader of the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» Ales Bialatsky was appeared the justice. Judge Trubnikau M.A. accused him of breaking the Article 167-1 part 2 of the Administrative Code. Ales Bialatsky was warned.

On November 10, 1998 in Minsk in Yakub Kolas Square there took place an authorised piquet of public initiative «Khartya-97» («Charter-97»). This piquet was dedicated to the anniversary of foundation of «Khartya-97». This organisation has existed for 1 year and it managed to collect more than 100.000 signatures against the dictatorship and for the independence of the country. The participants of the piquet held the slogans: «Khartya-97», «Lukashenka's dismissal!»

The militia and the people paid special attention to the slogan, held by Belarusan rock-musicians: «Dictatorship is s..t!» The militia didn't like it and they warned the participants of the piquet for using bad language. The musicians wondered what word sounded bad: the fist or the second one, but the militia refused to precise. 15 minutes later rock-musicians Liavon Volski, Viachaslau Koran, reporters Aleg Biabenin and Mikalai Khalezin were detained and put into the Savetsky Administration of Internal Affairs.

On November 12, 1998 in the centre of Minsk (in Internatsyyanalnaya Street, near the Academy of Music) the Human Rights Centre «Viasna-96» held a piquet to protect human rights. The participants had in their hands the portraits of political prisoners, as well as the slogans: «Belarus is born to be free», «Release the political prisoners, members of the BPF «Adradzhennie» – U.Pleshchanok, A.Shydlousky». In one of the slogans there was a red boot, which is rudely making dirty the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On November 12, 1998 a driver of Minsk Automobile Plant Mikalai Ramanau was brought before court of Partyzansky district. He was one of the participants of the meeting, organised by the Free Trade union on November 5, 1998. Having interrogated the witnesses (the militia officers), Judge Mikalai Trubnikau brought a verdict – three days of administrative arrest.

«Viasna-96» Information Department

UNA-UNSO in Minsk

OR HOW TERRORISTS ARE DISCLOSED

UNA-UNSO is an extreme right-wing Ukrainian organisation. In 1996 friends of UNA-UNSO were put on a groundless show-trial, the aim of which was to intimidate all Belarusan opposition and to link it with Ukrainian right-wing radicals in public opinion.

It would hardy make sense now to recollect the actions, happened two years ago, if not for the presidential election going to take place next year. It is just during preparation for elections and referendums when Lukashenka's team is thoroughly «seeking out» and «disclosing» opposition organisations. Experience is already at hand: just two years ago these lines' author was presented an arrest warrant in connection with the fact that she was suspected in «the foundation of a terrorist organisation with the aim to change the existing regime with a foreign centre's support». I was 23, and the picture of a girl with plaits, which appeared in the newspapers, reflected the absurdity of the event the best.

That day I with my fiance had coffee at the grocer's opposite the KGB building and together with our friends went to Kurapaty – the day was marked by the holiday commemorating ancestors – Dzyady. Then for some hours we were watched and a «seizure group» was there in an ambush awaiting for us in the students' hostel. They captured us rather severely: they pushed us into different corners, ordered not to make a move, and not bothering to explain anything began the search. It turned out to be quite a difficult thing, as I shared the room with three more girls, who also possessed books, cassettes and different papers. A detective Ales Drozd, a man wearing a tie with a spotted pattern (who also happened to be a son of my teacher, who had always been mocked by us due to his inclination to drink) ordered «to take everything that was there» and to drive us to the Administration of Internal Affairs. Cracking with his boots cosmetics lying on the floor, he examined «taken things»: my personal diary, several drafts and pictures, brochures of political contents, Victar Shalkevich's cassette due to its Belarusan language and also a pile of articles about «the Ukrainian seven trial.» The articles had managed to get out-of-date and had been left for me by a Ukrainian friend as material to write on (the other side of those sheets was used for my poetry). Two issues of the UNSO newspaper made the detective extremely happy – as approval of «belonging to UNSO». The only thing left was to feel sorry for me and wish me to say good-by to my job, freedom, university and fiancee, put on «bracelets» (handcaffs) and push into the car. That was the job of Aliaksandr Kuzmitsky, a cop.

At first the interrogation was like a play. But when this play dragged out and got obviously at a deadlock, Drozd noticeably got angry and went out to have a smoke. That was where the usual tactics of «a kind» and «mean» detective started. «The mean» Kuzmitsky without a word pushed me onto the floor, kicked me and jingling with scissors in front of my eyes shouted: «You do not talk, bitch!» But I hardly could be tipped what to answer, if you are forced to confirm, that «Mr. X» (the name of a famous member of the opposition was said) gave you a gun and taught how to use it. Having understood it is better to keep silent (it could not get worse) I drooped completely, and Kuzmitsky was completely driven over the edge. My beating was stopped only because Drozd heard cracking of the broken arm-chair – the only one in his «torture room» – and immediately rushed back to go on playing the role of a «kind detective».

A young lieutenant, my escort, was the only one to feel ill at ease at the «execution». Obviously, he used to take part in such acts, but here instead of a criminal, there was an initiator of coup d'йtat, who could be sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment or even more under the Article 61 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.

That is why he became more merciful on my way to a toilet he put into my pocket some cigarettes and whispered that they had fiercely beaten my groom but they had promised to let him go at 12 o'clock. I calmed down a little, but the wedding ring, which my fiance had presented me with several days earlier vanished in the detective Drozd's pocket. I've lost sight of it for ever.



Shortly afterwards there appeared one more person – Artsvik Madayan, a detective of Maskousky prosecutor's office too. He, producing unpleasant smell of having drunk too much alcohol, aborted complaining that he had been invited to a birthday party and had been forced to leave it. That is why he was angry and felt sorry for me.

I still wonder when and how I refused my defence. It turned out that all this time he was standing behind the door, because he was told that I did not need his service. But in reality all the time I kept on insisting on seeing my counsel for defence.

Here should be explained why the author of the article was honoured to be at the head of the «coup d'йtat». This story began during the trial of the UNSO members, being arrested for participation in «Chernobyl rally» in 1996. New friends sold to us a number of books to buy products and cigarettes for prisoners. Our charity was used to «disclose» a terrorist organisation. After my arrest, its friends were spotted at random. They interrogated a law-abiding friend from «Belaruskaya Niva» and my apprentices from the law department and even my roommates, who have never took hold of any newspaper except for puzzles and crosswords. One of my friends suffered more than others: «cops» held her and drove in the car for hours, threatening with all possible tortures.

When I got to know that I would have to spend 3 days in the prison cell I sighed with relief. I would go mad from claustrophobia three days after, waiting for another interrogation. I shared the cell with a young recidivist, she told about her life and I felt I was going mad listening to all her stories. She used to start every story with a piece of advice how to behave in the zone. But finally we became friends. My last interrogation. Although my detective had managed to tell me that I would be released if I promised not to leave the city, our «talking» lasted for 7 hours. 40-year-old man printed 10 times my word not to leave the city and ... tore it as though he hesitated at releasing. They were to charge me (or not to charge me) 15 days after.

My friends, my groom and Ukrainian representative Aleg Vitovich did everything possible they could– they used to write to different newspapers and embassies. The others tried to persuade me that everything would be OK (though they did not hope for).

Everything passed by, I was not charged with, was not given the confiscated personal paper and the wedding ring. But we got married without it. The law-abiding friend from «Belaruskaya Niva» got married with my counsel for defence and they, as well as many other UNSO members have children. Young parents are afraid of the next year more than anything else, because they are sure that something will happen: a referendum and, perhaps, a new terrorist organisation. Somebody will be arrested again.

Ts.PALYNSKAYA

By Andrey Melnikau

A Trip Behind Bars

A room three twenty by two with a very thick walls form a natural bay. To the right of it, just behind the door there is a place to satisfy the call of nature, a little bit further – a tap with a sink. To the left a vertical central heating radiator and a little of free space. Concrete floor. In the far end of the cell, higher than eyes' level, - a small window behind bars, also with a bay. Closer to the window, on the two sides – two-tier metal plank-bed, laid with plywood.

Five convicted men are sitting on the plank-bed. Two of them are about 40 years old. One is a tall, shaved, cut close to the skin, good-looking man in a soft checked shirt and another one – simple, rather long-haired with a moustache and a thin Gypsy-looking face. The other three are younger. A roundish, short fellow, as if taken from an advertisement about happy family life (ironically he turned out to have been sentenced for a year of «zone» for not paying alimony) and two cut to the skin gays in black – a tall and a short one.

I greet them and they meet me in a friendly way. Mainly the faces are familiar – we were in a «glass» together. I take a seat on the plank-bed to the left. The tall fellow, a Moscow-Lida anarchist Valera, happened to have seen me with a guitar on TV and I feel a pleasant breath of fame. My taking part in the conversation on human rights of an imprisoned person we had in the «glass» (a special cell) and the fact that I am going through the eleventh day of a hunger-strike (I said it in the «glass» too, after validol brought me to my senses) also had some effect. A good beginning in a prison fellowship. The fellows, meanwhile, take from their secret supplies fat, onions, bread and invite me to share the meal. I refuse politely – I mean to continue the hunger strike. Nobody forces me to eat but the «intelligent man» in a shirt, the obvious leader of the group, starts delivering me a lecture on prison hunger-strikes.

«It is foolish that you have been on the hunger-strike for ten days. Nobody cares. You have only sapped your health. Here you can hunger for them – and he points at the door – but at «home» eat fat, chocolate. To hunger in prison means to deny food supplied by the state. «Givens» (parcels) according to the prison rules are not taken into account. And you have them, you can be on «hunger-strike» for months».

When you go on hunger-strike you have to write a declaration where you should state your aims. Without this declaration your hunger-strike won't be even noticed. So you go on hunger-strike. You begin to be called to the «fellow-sponsor» (operational detective). He tries to persuade you to stop the hunger-strike. A day, two, three ... Then you are moved to the lock-up to be kept for about five days and then you will be fed compulsorily, through the hose. There are a lot of such people who are on hunger-strike. As a rule, they get nothing and not many people know about them. It means that either when several people strike or as in my case, I can consider, that the information about my actions reaches the freedom outside and makes a stir.



The first lesson of realism. No, I don't regret my having been on hunger-strike. Except an easier adaptation in prison life without food has urged me on a new understanding of reality – a more sober one.

Some time after the «lectures» I went out of the hunger-strike. My going out of the hunger-strike was made with the help of «chif» (a very strong tea), that «the intelligent» had brewed. To have brewed «chif» with the absence of electricity in the cell, «firewood» and «a pig» (pig's fat) are used. Of course, you can try to make an electric chain from the lamp. In permanent cells people do it this way. You take an electric wire (taken, for example, from a burn boiler), untwist it, and so with two-four thin copper wires you can make an electric wire. The other wires are left just in case «the net» is confiscated, as material for another electric wire. And besides, a thin electric wire is easier to disguise – in a small ditch, for example, in a mat covered with chalk or toothpaste. If it is done accurately it is very difficult to find. Even during a «shmon» (search). If there are no wires to make «the net» you can adjust fail of chocolate bars. But when «in quarantine cell» – place where the imprisoned are kept before the medical commission and sanitary treatment – it is not rational to make and to use «the net». To make «firewood» is easier and it takes less time. Things of natural fibre – terry towels, cotton shirts, a denim jacket – are the most suitable. You should not be very sorry to use these things – in prison, in general, you should not be sorry for anything or anybody. All in all, the subject of the inevitability of sacrifices in prison conditions is worth a separate serious study. Conditions of overcrowding and lack of freedom lead to the increase of aggressiveness. The situation provokes sacrifices. And to sacrifice personal belongings, even if they are scarce is the most inoffencive and that is why, perhaps, the most helpful. If you get to prison, do not grudge anything!

My cell mate just tears his shirt sleeves off and makes of it a kind of a cell-made torch. He also uses fat to make it burn better. Somebody stands «on eye» – closing the inspection hole so as the forbidden process will not be seen from outside. The man «on eye» is an integral detail of any forbidden actions when they can be noticed by the guard. And there is plenty of such things.

«Chif» is brewed in a smoked corner near «the bayan» (central heating radiator). So «the chif» is ready. «Alimony bellow» refuses and places himself near the inspection hole. We drink taking the cup all round. Traditionally each makes two sips at a time and the last to drink is the person who has made it. I confine myself to small single sip anxiously listening to my body. In what way will it react? Will the heart break out of my chest? But there is nothing of the kind. I even get a little warmer, although, «chif» is said to burn the calories. After «chif» someone hands out candies as a special treat. And again I listen to my stomach's reaction. Everything is OK!

Later there was more of «chif», this time with pieces of fat, bread and onions. Two more people were put into our cell. A thin and tall «sotchyk» (people who have been convicted for murder according to the article 100 of the Criminal Code are called so), also charged with rape, before us pleaded not guilty in both convictions and refused to drink «chif», saying he was «winding up».

(continuation from volumes 15-19)

(to be continued)

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Address: 220007, Minsk, p/b 88. E-mail: rights@v96.open.by

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